



CHINESE CHURCH SUPPORT MINISTRIES

CHINA PRAYER LETTER



JUNE 2021

Vision Transition

A returning family share their story...

We had travelled home from China to America for medical treatment in October 2018 but by the end of 2019 we were ready to go back to China.

After spending over a year in the States, our children were initially reluctant to leave their relatives and friends. But as the time grew closer they became excited, remembering their friends in China and our apartment, toys, books and life they had left there. They started talking to their classmates and teachers about leaving for China.

We were finishing last-minute sharing, packing bags and were beginning to look for the right flight tickets when news of the epidemic (not yet a pandemic) began to trickle out. It took a few weeks after we told the children we'd be delayed for the news to sink in.



In this issue

Vision Transition

Lily's Story. Part 1

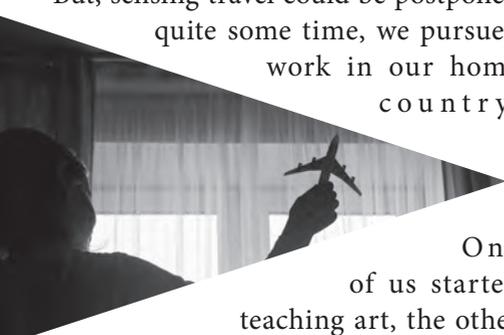
Lily's Story. Part 2

Pray For Authorities

Pastor Wu Wei 吴巍牧师

Even when China closed its borders, it took us all a long time to stop talking about going back soon.

But, sensing travel could be postponed quite some time, we pursued work in our home country.



One

of us started

teaching art, the other

has become involved in working

with international students at local universities. In reflection, God had already prepared us, as he had moved us to begin working with international students while we were still in China.

More recently, we had friends help us return our apartment to the landlord. There is grief in that. 10 boxes are being shipped to us, but the rest of our belongings were sold off or given away. We are looking forward to the boxes' arrival, and we hope the things that are coming are what the children most treasure.

The release of our apartment in China closes one door and leaves opportunity for another to open in God's timing. We've come to realize that the loss of these relationships, these places, these things gives us a choice to either hold onto the grief, or to release those

things to God, to let go of them and worship him with them.

We've seen some of the work we had begun in China carry on, led by collaborators. For a long time, one of the groups continued meeting in our apartment after we left. We are blessed to see the vision we had is still alive, but we dearly miss being able to serve in that vision. When China prohibited in-person meetings, we treasured being able to meet with the group online, joining in the meetings from overseas.

At the same time, there is a work for us to do here and now. If we continually look back, we will miss what's before us. Sometimes we really do have to lift up our eyes to see the harvest field in front of us. We are continually learning to embrace the blessing of being with our Father here and now, hearing his thoughts and joining him in his work.

It has been challenging to make new heart connections while keeping in touch with friends who are also going through similar transitions. Some are being called to other countries, often to work with the same people groups in those places. Some are going through very difficult trials with their families – ours experienced heightened anxiety, stress, and fear. Some keep trying to get back into China—some have been able to go, most have not.

For now, we are trying to buy a house near the local university. While this

sounds, and sometimes feels, like we're settling in, it's in fact opening up more opportunities to host and minister to international students where we are, at this time.

Every day, little things cause flashbacks, a Chinese word slips out, an object

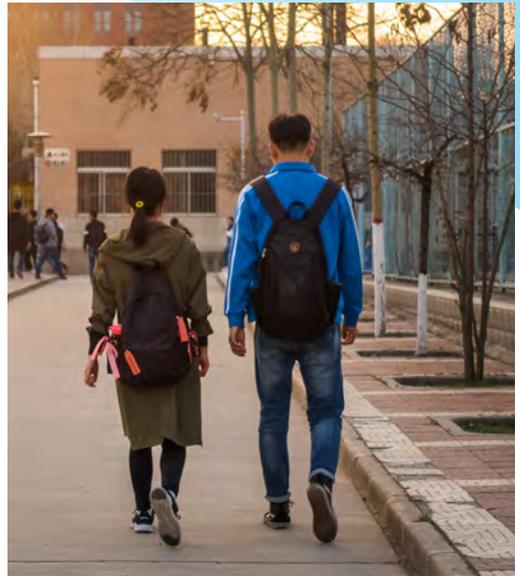
invokes a memory, a face looks like a distant friend and each time our hearts ache and we fight back tears and brush off the memory. Or we let the tears flow and worship God, thanking him for the allowing us to serve him in China...and wherever we are.

Lily's Story. Part 1

A Chinese student currently studying abroad tells us about her experiences as a young believer back home in China.

She had first heard the name of Jesus from an Aunt who she now realizes was a Jehovah Witness. Fortunately she thought her Aunt foolish to believe such nonsense!

As a university student in Xian in 2015,



International Short-Term Teams

Email CCSM at
teams@amccsm.org to
find out what we have on offer.

she
was
keen to
practice English and
heard about an “English
Corner” led by a number of local
and visiting foreigners. Here small
groups, each with one of the foreign
English speakers, talked about all sorts
of topics. Strangely it seemed to her it
often came round to a common faith
they seemed to have in that person
her Aunt had spoken of - Jesus. She
was very impressed with these people
who seemed to be very loving and
encouraging. But when they said they
would take a coffee break and then do
Bible study for those that wanted, she
left. *(Writer’s note: Actually most people
stayed for the second half of these weekly
programmes with very fruitful outcomes.
It would be very risky to have such public
meetings these days)*

One member of the visiting team had
shared his faith with her. He was not
pushy and said he just wanted to give
her information to allow her to make a
decision about Christianity. She agreed
to his offer that on his return home they
would do a daily 5am Skype session and
work through the book of John – 10
verses a day . It took more than three
months -never missing a single day -
and she knew something was happening
in her heart.

Later that year when another visiting
team of foreigners from New Zealand

came she found that they too seemed to
be cut from the same cloth – full of love
and joy and good humour! When they
invited her to a Marriage Seminar they
were leading she declined. At 20 years
of age she had no interest in marriage!

But a good friend asked her to come
and keep her company so reluctantly
she went. The speakers spoke about
Biblical marriage which sounded too
good to be true! When she eventually
gets married she thought this would be
how she would like it to be.

From there a further invitation followed
to attend a Thanksgiving Dinner the
next night. She knew she was ready
to receive Jesus but her self-admitted
stubbornness held her back. But early
the next morning she Skyped her foreign
Bible teacher who helped her through a
life changing decision.

When this news reached the team in
Xian there was great rejoicing!

From there things happened at lightning
speed. Within a few months she was
leading Bible studies (she used small
group Bible study resources from
Precept.org which are available in
over 80 languages) and soon after, was
training others to lead. From stubborn
resistance it was now on fire for the
Lord!

Her next step was to find a local
church.... That story next time.

Lily's Story.

Part 2

After coming to faith in Jesus, Lily's spiritual bread came from three sources. Her New Zealand mentor who continued to do Bible study with her on-line, local foreign workers, and her Precept studies (Precept.org provides Bible study resources in over 80 languages) which taught her inductive methods to self-learn from Scripture.

Her foreign Christian friends suggested she find a church. After some time she was directed to a place that from its inception had a special calling to minister to university students and young people in general. Here she found her spiritual home.

The Pastor was a young family man in his mid 30s. Unlike many, he dressed casually and had a sense of humour. His preaching was from the Word and gave Biblical guidance to his young audience – knowing the challenges they faced. A graduate of a Teachers' University, he studied with some American Chinese working in China, then some seminary training in Hong Kong and a time at Dallas Theological Seminary in America.

Lily found out that the church believed that a pastor is worthy of his hire. They made sure he was paid above minimum wages. Unlike many pastors in China,



he was able to adequately provide for his family.

When Lily first went she had only a vague idea that the family (underground) church was increasingly under attack in China. She had little idea of the need for discretion until she went to attend her first service. The church was in an office building. The signboard gave details about all the tenants EXCEPT the church. There was no sign on the door nor cross outside the building. It was totally anonymous. Inside around 100 worshippers met with another 100 coming for a second morning service. Many of them were students but over time there was a growing number of young married couples and children.

The church did, like many others, use WeChat to communicate with its members. Whilst this may seem risky, the sheer number of people

using WeChat including churches provides some degree of protection. They still use WeChat!

If a Westerner were to attend that church they would find its programmes and order of service quite familiar. A music team with keyboards, guitar and drums leads the worship. The pastor preaches for 45 minutes and then the church breaks up into small groups to discuss the sermon and to pray. There is a Children's programme during the 2nd service. There are mid - week Bible studies and prayer meetings.

On one Sunday when Lily was not at church, the service was raided by the police. There were no arrest only warnings. The pastor, however, has been called into the police station on a number of occasions for the well - known "cup of tea." So far he has not been arrested, just questioned for a few hours and released.

Two years after Lily joined, the church started a new work nearer to her workplace and she was asked to head up the student work at that new site.

A remarkable rate of growth and maturity for this young lady.

Today as a 25 year old, Lily is in New Zealand doing undergraduate study as well as holding down a near full time job. She works with her local church outreaching to students at a nearby university. She also works with an internationally known student ministry on the same campus. She speaks in churches sharing her testimony.

Those of us who met her in those English Corners five years ago marvel at how God works and how he takes the "most stubborn" ones and uses them to His glory!

Pray For Authorities

"I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness". [Paul's 1st letter to Timothy, ch. 2 v.1-2]

"Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God." [Paul's letter to the Romans ch.13 v.1]

"The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will." [Proverbs 21:1]

Recently CCSM was presented with a request to share with our readers a little

about the leaders of China's official state church system. Who are the key figures

PRAYER POINTERS

JUNE 2021

Vision Transition

If you know someone in these circumstances, continue to support them, encourage them and pray for them.

Pray for the children of returned families who may be struggling to cope with change and loss, and may be experiencing fear, stress and anxiety.

Pray that the Lord's whisper will be heard through the grief and that His servants will catch His renewed purpose for their lives today.

Pray that friends remaining in China will be encouraged, that ministries will be nurtured and that foreign workers will soon be able to return.

Lily's Story. Part 1

Pray that as witnessing becomes more risky in China that God will make a way for young people like Lily to hear about Jesus.

Pray that the local churches will continue to have great success in evangelism as they reach out to their local neighbourhoods. Protect them and keep them safe.

Pray that Christian leaders will make good use of technology to reach people where they are at. Pray that they would use this wisely and keep themselves and the recipients safe.

Lily's Story. Part 2

Pray for the church described in this story – for safety and growth in their special area of focus – the university campuses.

Pray for Lily that she will know where next and what path to take. No doubt God has special plans for her.

Praise God for the many who have gone to China on CCSM teams and have been blessed for their faithfulness by seeing results like this.



Chinese Church Support Ministries

Seeking to serve, strengthen
and support the church and
the people of China

PRAYER POINTERS

Pray For Authorities

Give praise to Jesus, to whom all authority in Heaven and on Earth has been given. (Matt 28:18)

Praise God that He does not sleep, that He loves justice and that He rules in the kingdom of men (Daniel 4:17).

Pray that the Chinese church (and the church elsewhere) will be have the faith and strength to live under authority, as described in 1 Peter 2:13-25, fearing God and honouring the king.

May the church heed the warning in Jude 1.8-9 before they pray, or speak, about authorities.

Pray for the authorities in China, both those in government and in the church.

Pastor Wu Wei 吴巍牧师

Thank our Heavenly Father that He is building His church in China.

Pray for Rev. Wu Wei as he balances the demands of his work with his family life.

Pray that Rev. Wu Wei will daily have revelation of the Lord [Ephesians 3:14-20], and that he will have the strength to seek the Lord in every decision.



and how can we pray for them?

Therefore, in the upcoming months we will present a few of these leaders in the hope that our readers will put into action Paul's call for prayer as in Timothy 2:1 above. The ministries of Paul and Timothy both faced Jewish law and Roman rule. Paul and Timothy understood what it was like to practice and share their faith under authorities even when those authorities were sometimes hostile to the spread of the gospel.

The chart on the following page is designed to give some insight as to how the TSPM, the state authorised church, operates under the government oversight. We show it only to share with our readers the situation of the Church in China so they have a better understanding.

Christ never promised his disciples deliverance from Roman rule, but rather salvation from the wages of sin and restoration of right relationship with our creator. Every believer should seek God's Kingdom (and by this His 'Kingship') and His righteousness, wherever he is [Matt 6:33] - in Rome, in China or elsewhere. Only by obediently following the lead of the Holy Spirit will any believer hear the words, "well done my good and faithful servant".

Likewise, CCSM has no interest in political activism, our only desire is to serve, strengthen, and support our brothers and sisters in China through



informed prayer, provision of the gospel and communion. In return we are encouraged by God's faithfulness to the Chinese Church in their struggles and strengthened in our own faith by their witness.

The Chinese state church has two arms - the CCC (China Christian Council) and the TSPM (Three Self Patriotic Movement). Together they are known as the "Two Councils (Lianghui)", or the National Christian Councils. The TSPM, broadly speaking, runs the administration of the Chinese Protestant Church, whereas the CCC is the body that governs the theology. It formulates church order, training programs, Bible school and seminary education, and is editor of all church literature. Through the CCC the Chinese church is represented at the World Council of Churches. The only legal way to distribute Bibles in China is under authorisation of the Lianghui, although it is not clear as to how, or who, exactly determines the number to be printed by Amity Press for distribution in China.

The first TSPM leader we will feature this month will be Pastor Wu Wei 吴巍牧师, president of the China Christian Council (CCC).

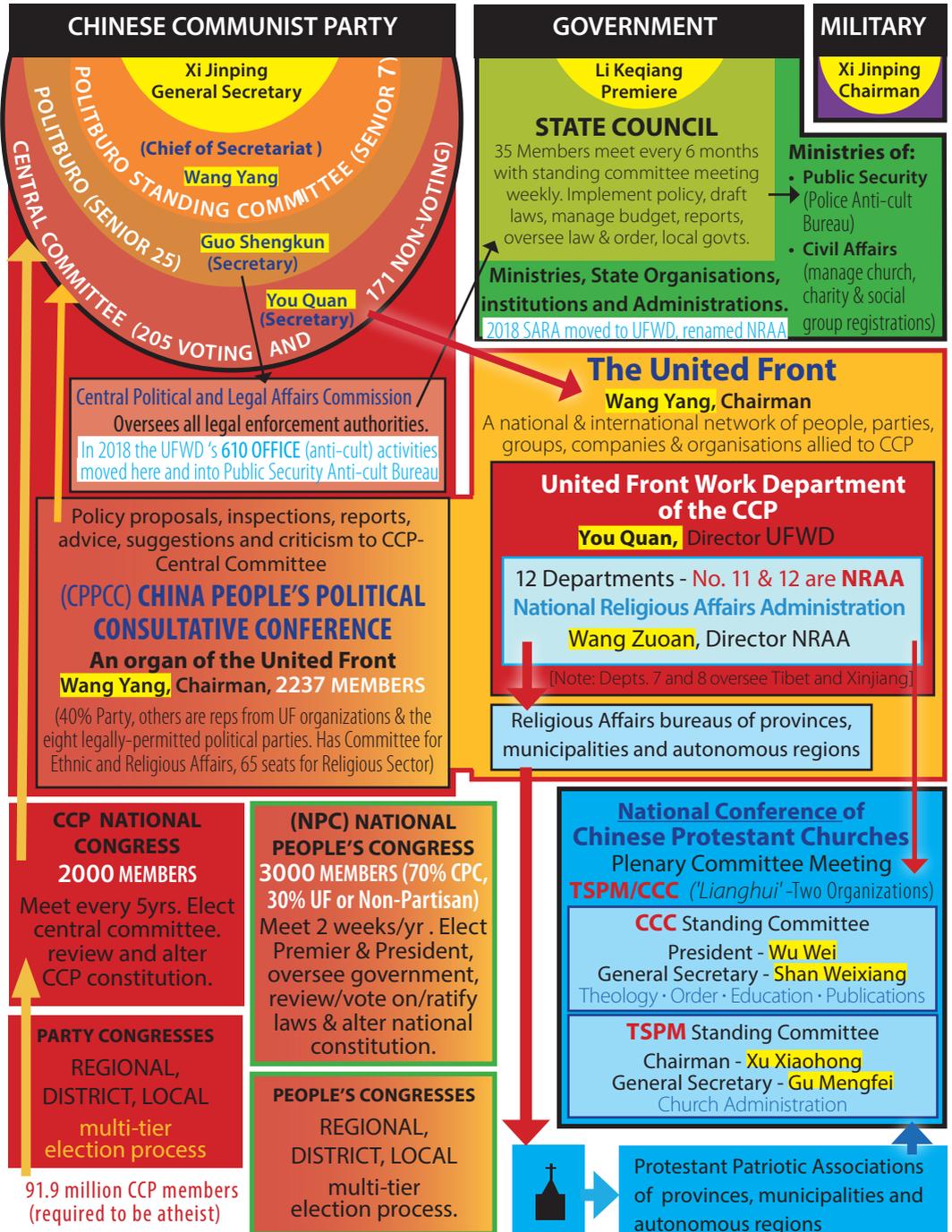
CHINA'S STATE OVERSIGHT OF THE PROTESTANT CHURCH

"Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God." [Romans 13:1]

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PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA (PRC)

Xi Jinping - President



Pastor Wu Wei

吴巍牧师

Wu Wei was born in 1963 of Han nationality. He grew up in a Christian home in Beijing and went on to graduate from the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary.

He served as pastor, senior pastor, and vice president of Beijing's ChongWenmen Church which was built in 1870 by the American Methodist Episcopal church. It is also known as Asbury Church. The original 500 seat church was burned down during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 and rebuilt by the Qing Dynasty government four years later. It was again damaged during the Cultural Revolution and repurposed, but was later restored with government funds and returned to church use. Today, it can seat 2000. In 2017, the church boasted over 6000 members, multiple services, simultaneous English interpretation, 13 clergymen, 800 volunteers and more than 100 fellowships which conduct activities during the week.

Unsurprisingly, after bearing the scars of such social upheaval, the church now focuses on social service and promoting social harmony through various charity activities.

During his time at ChongWenmen, Rev. Wu Wei preached before foreign dignitaries such as Bill Clinton. He also pastored briefly at Gangwa City



Gangwa City Church, Beijing 北京基督教会缸瓦市堂网站 www.gwshcc.org

Church, another historic Beijing TSPM church, in 2002. But it was while he was at ChongWenmen that he encountered teachers serving with Mennonite Partners in China, an organisation that facilitates cross-cultural student exchange. They encouraged him to attend the Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) Seminary in Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA. He studied there for four years, also participating in their Intensive English Program, and attained a Masters in Divinity in 2006.

Wu interned at the Parkview Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg before he and his wife, Wu Jinzhen took a job pastoring a small Chinese-language congregation in Louisville, Kentucky where they remained for five years.

The Mennonite community of churches around the world are by no means singular in their doctrine but are known for the strong value they place on the Word of God. The Eastern Mennonites follow the Simons branch of teaching, they are mission-hearted and focus strongly on Jesus being a proponent

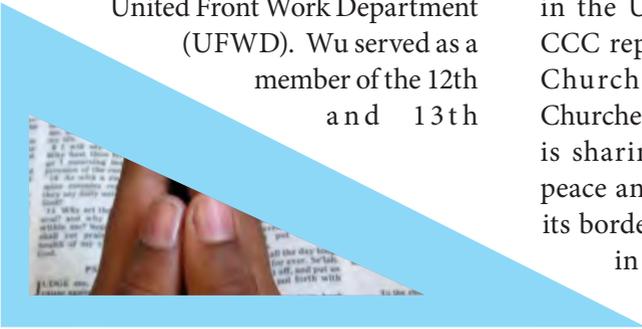
of peace. The themes of unity and peace are clearly at the heart of many of Wu Wei's sermons.

On returning to China in 2011, Wu was asked by church leaders and the government to serve in an administrative capacity, overseeing churches and pastors in Beijing. He served as vice president (and then president) of the Beijing Christian Academic Affairs Committee, and director-general of Beijing Youth Christian Association. Seven years later, at the 10th Annual China Christian Conference in November 2018, he was elected president of the China Christian Council (CCC). This was the same year that SARA, the State Administration of Religious Affairs was moved away from the State Council and placed under the United Front Work Department (UFWD). Wu served as a member of the 12th and 13th

National Committee of the United Front's CPPCC (National People's Political Consultative Conference).

In both the earlier administrative roles and his current role as president of the CCC, Rev. Wu Wei must navigate the challenging environment where government policy is often divergent with Christ's mission to the church. The CCC is the body charged with training church personnel not only in Christian doctrine but also in government rules, regulations, socialist ideology and doctrine, and patriotism.

Another element of Rev. Wu Wei's work as president of the CCC, is meeting with foreign church delegations and dignitaries. His years of experience in the USA are put to good use. The CCC represent the Chinese Protestant Church at the World Council of Churches. Together with them, the CCC is sharing its brand of church unity, peace and ecumenical theology beyond its borders by playing a significant role in the Foundation for Theological Education in Southeast Asia.



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